

Saint Mary's College of California

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Saint Mary's Magazine

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Spring 2021

### Saint Mary's Magazine - Spring 2021

Saint Mary's College of California

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# SAINT MARY'S

SPRING 2021

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Retiring President James Donahue reflects on his Saint Mary's legacy.



## **RICHARD PLUMB**

**NAMED 30TH PRESIDENT OF SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE**



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## Welcome



“Our faculty have risen to new heights to create innovative forms of teaching that allow students to keep up their studies on their path toward successful, meaningful roles after graduation.”

Over the past year, Saint Mary's staff, faculty, and students have shown enormous resilience in the face of a global pandemic. Consistent with the Lasallian core principles, Saint Mary's has exhibited concern for one another by keeping our community's health—individually and collectively—top of mind in every decision we make. We have continued to support our inclusive community and respect for all persons by allowing students flexible plans of study, on-campus housing whenever possible, and the latest in technology to make hands-on learning—one of Saint Mary's proudest features—possible. Our faculty have risen to new heights to create innovative forms of teaching that allow students to keep up their studies on their path toward successful, meaningful roles after graduation. I could not be prouder of our community.

To celebrate resilience, this issue of *Saint Mary's* magazine provides you an inside look at the College's successes across the past year, including preparing campus to reopen in the face of a constantly changing environment. You'll learn about our beautiful high-tech pavilions that dot the campus and how technology allowed courses to be conducted both online and in person.

We're also pleased to be celebrating 50 Years of Women at Saint Mary's. We honor the occasion by highlighting several women who have contributed not just to the College but to the fields of education, finance, law, art, and beyond.

Additionally, we announce our new Scholarship Initiative: Students First, which aims to help close the tuition gap for students by raising \$10 million by June 2023. I'm thrilled to announce the naming of the James A. Donahue Presidential Endowed Scholarship as part of this initiative. It will support students with strong academic promise and high financial need.

As many of you know, I will be retiring from the College at the end of spring semester, after eight years of service. I'm delighted to be profiled in this issue and to discuss my deep feelings about Saint Mary's, our students, our community, and the future of higher education. In addition, this issue introduces Saint Mary's 30th president, Dr. Richard Plumb, who will join us in July. Plumb currently serves as the executive vice president and provost of the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn. I could not be leaving the College in better hands.

I would also like to take a moment to thank Saint Mary's for naming me and my wife, Jane Purinton, as honorary alumni members. We love being Gaels! I wish the Saint Mary's community all the best and am confident that it will continue to flourish as a superb Lasallian, Catholic, and liberal arts institution in the years ahead.

Sincerely,  
James A. Donahue  
President

STEVE BABUJAK

COVER: MARK BROWN; TOP: HALEY NELSON

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## TWO INTERNSHIPS FOR ONE DETERMINED STUDENT

Melissa Goan '21 is one busy young woman, managing two internships and applying for her postgraduate dream job as a deputy Title IX coordinator, who works to prevent sex discrimination and sexual misconduct on a college campus. She holds internships with SMC's Office of Community Life and the Daraja Education Fund (DEF), which supports girls' education in Kenya.

"I'm currently working with Community Life as a Title IX intern," Goan shared. "I approached them about an internship opportunity, and they said yes. I received a Liberal Arts Bridge [LAB] scholarship to help fund my internship and had help from faculty to also receive course credit.

"The Title IX internship has been fundamental in getting me in the position for the interview and to put my best foot forward," said Goan, a Sociology and Women's and Gender Studies major.

Goan also obtained her second internship with the DEF through her outreach and networking efforts. "I reached out to DEF and asked if they had internship opportunities. I was hired, and this internship was also funded through the LAB scholarship program."

Assistant Professor and LAB Internship Coordinator Zahra Ahmed commended Goan for her achievements. "In the face of COVID, Melissa was persistent and reached out to multiple organizations to secure internships," said Ahmed. —*Kay Carney*



Melissa Goan served as a MICAH fellow for Oakland's St. Mary's Center in 2019.



Graduates of the 2019 TRIO program.

## SMC Receives \$1.3M to Support Low-Income and First-Gen Students

Saint Mary's High Potential/TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) program has been awarded a five-year, \$1.3 million grant to enhance academic support services. This is the largest grant the program has received since its inception in 1970.

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE), the SSS initiative is a highly successful effort that provides a continuum of enhanced academic support services for low-income and first-generation students, and students with disabilities at the College.

SSS works to bolster students from low-income families who have not had the same academic opportunities as their college peers. This program helps students remove obstacles that may prevent them from thriving academically.

"The TRIO SSS program takes an interconnected view of students' success, drawing upon and expanding their personal and academic strengths throughout their time at Saint Mary's," said Megan Mustain, acting chief academic officer and dean of the Core.

The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the systemic inequality and financial hardship that can keep promising students from succeeding in college, and SSS provides a buffer and safety net for low-income and first-generation students to help ensure their academic success, especially with the virtual and online learning platforms.

"Transitioning to college is challenging for all students, but it can be especially daunting for low-income and first-generation students," said Jenee Palmer, director of the College's High Potential Program and TRIO Student Support Services.

The substantial grant allows the TRIO SSS program to continue its excellent work of meeting low-income and first-generation college students where they are—and to build on the students' strengths with academic guidance and individualized support, culminating in a successful collegiate experience and the achievement of graduation. —*K.C.*

INTERNSHIP: MICHAEL COLLOPY; SMC RECEIVES: HALEY NELSON

SMC RESPONDS: HALEY NELSON

## Saint Mary's Students Work to Support Black Lives Matter

Just eight days after the May 25 killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers, Black Student Union (BSU) President Shilei Bell-Lipsey '22 shared a letter addressed to the campus community, calling for steps to purposefully work against racism and create more inclusion for Black students, staff, and faculty.

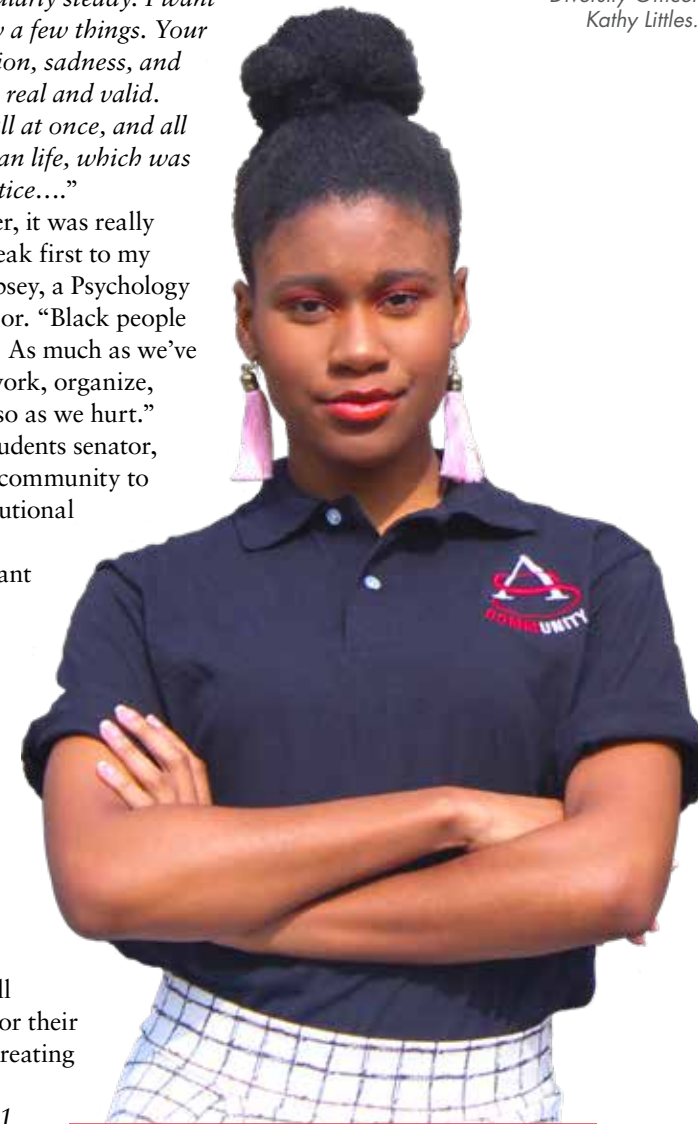
*"To My Black Gael Family:*

*...As I write to you, I struggle to find the words because my heart is heavy. Over the course of this week I've found myself spiraling through emotions, as I am sure you have too. From rage to crippling sadness, there hasn't been a time when I've felt particularly steady. I want you to indisputably know a few things. Your feelings of anger, exhaustion, sadness, and whatever else you feel are real and valid. You get to feel all those, all at once, and all the time. This was a human life, which was lost and has yet to see justice...."*

"When I wrote the letter, it was really important to me that I speak first to my community," said Bell-Lipsey, a Psychology and Sociology double major. "Black people were and still are hurting. As much as we've continued to go back to work, organize, and revolutionize, we do so as we hurt."

A former Associated Students senator, Bell-Lipsey called on our community to create change on an institutional level at Saint Mary's by implementing policies meant specifically for the safety and inclusion of Black students. "We don't have a single Black member of the Counseling and Psychological Services Department on campus," noted Bell-Lipsey, before the College hired Carnetta Porter, PsyD, as a part-time therapist. "Institutional change is a requirement. The BSU will hold people accountable for their triumphs and failures in creating this change."

—*Annaliese Martinez '21*



Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs and Senior Diversity Officer  
Kathy Littles.



## SMC RESPONDS TO CALLS FOR JUSTICE

In response to a list of demands by the president of the College's Black Student Union, the Black Lives Matter Committee, and the Ethnic Studies Program, Saint Mary's created a new training program to address issues of oppression, justice, and racism.

Gaels Uniting for Inclusion and Diversity Through Education (GUIDE) held its first workshop in October 2020. The three-part training launched with a diverse cohort of 24 faculty and staff.

"GUIDE provides an opportunity to shift the conversation to talk about institutional racism, institutional sexism, and white supremacy in a way that allows people to speak their truth and to discuss practical solutions on how we work with one another," said Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs and Senior Diversity Officer Kathy Littles.

The GUIDE training allowed participants to engage in deep reflection through a personal lens. "It was powerful to experience community members co-creating a brave space and being vulnerable with each other while discussing oppression, privilege, and power as it relates to the systemic structures at SMC," shared Shaunna Vella, LEAP program director.

The next GUIDE training will be held in spring 2021. —*K.C.*



From left: Esther Woo '20, Eileanoir Dawson '22, and Gabriel Ponce '21 taking measurements in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Students in Summer Research Program Examine COVID's Effect on Air Quality

Two students took advantage of the School of Science's Summer Research Program to examine COVID's effect on the environment—to sometimes surprising results. Despite restrictions from the pandemic on in-person teaching, students delved into their inquiries using a wealth of data, honing their independent research skills.

In their two research projects, Liana Garcia '21 and Justin Eisenmann '21, mentored by Chemistry Professor Joel Burley, looked at data on the interconnections between air quality and the COVID-19 pandemic to see whether there had been a reduction in pollution given COVID's restrictions on traveling, and whether areas

known for bad air pollution have faced worsening conditions during the pandemic.

Burley acknowledged that this was no ordinary summer. "The need for social distancing dramatically changed the way I had to conduct business," Burley said. Rather than travel to national parks as usual, "students had to demonstrate a higher level of independence and initiative."

Senior Chemistry major Liana Garcia focused on air pollution and COVID-19 mortality and morbidity. "Harvard came out with a study saying people who had a longer-term exposure to PM 2.5 [a toxic air pollutant] were more likely to die of COVID," she said. "China and India had

lower cases and deaths even though they're the worst countries with air pollution. This might have been due to when lockdown started because China was one of the first to lock down, so they had the number of deaths more under control."

Senior in Chemistry Justin Eisenmann examined the relationship between air quality and COVID here at home. "My research was an attempt to prove the hypothesis presented by many institutions that the COVID-19 shutdowns reduced air pollution," he said. "Unfortunately, I found that the difference was about the same as the standard deviation." —*Linda Lenhoff*



Biology and Dance major Kristen Harnett '20 examined the safety of BPA alternatives.

### STUDENTS TEST THE TOXICITY OF BPA ALTERNATIVES

Future scientists Kristen Harnett '20, Isabel Cohen '21, Lucy Moore '21, and Ashley Chin '22 spent their summer challenging claims about the safety of bisphenol A (BPA)-free bottles, containers, and other materials. The students tested BPA alternatives' toxicity during a Saint Mary's Summer Research Program mentored by Professor of Biology Sonya Schuh.

"Currently, only BPA is being regulated, but we need to really understand the toxicity and the effects that the alternative compounds have," said Cohen, an Allied Health Science major.

According to Chin, a Biochemistry major, manufacturers sometimes replace BPA with a chemical that is "slightly altered, and it either has the same effects or worse."

"We looked at the effects of BPA alternatives on human and rat stem cells and chick embryos," said Harnett, a Biology and Dance double major. The team "discovered reproductive and developmental defects," she said.

"A lot of our research is going to get published in the future," said Moore. "This program is special because not a lot of undergraduate students get to work with a mentor and learn these different techniques. I'm getting a great advantage before I go into graduate school." —*K.C.*

## Summer Research Students Plan a Mission to Mars

This year's Summer Research Program project Mission to Mars took its students out of the classroom and far, far away—virtually, of course. Mentored by Associate Professor of Geological Sciences Alice Baldrige and Serina Diniega, a scientist at Jet Propulsion Lab (JPL), students learned how to design a mission to Mars, working as a team of engineers and scientists to develop mission and science goals as well as learning about the spacecraft's engineering requirements.

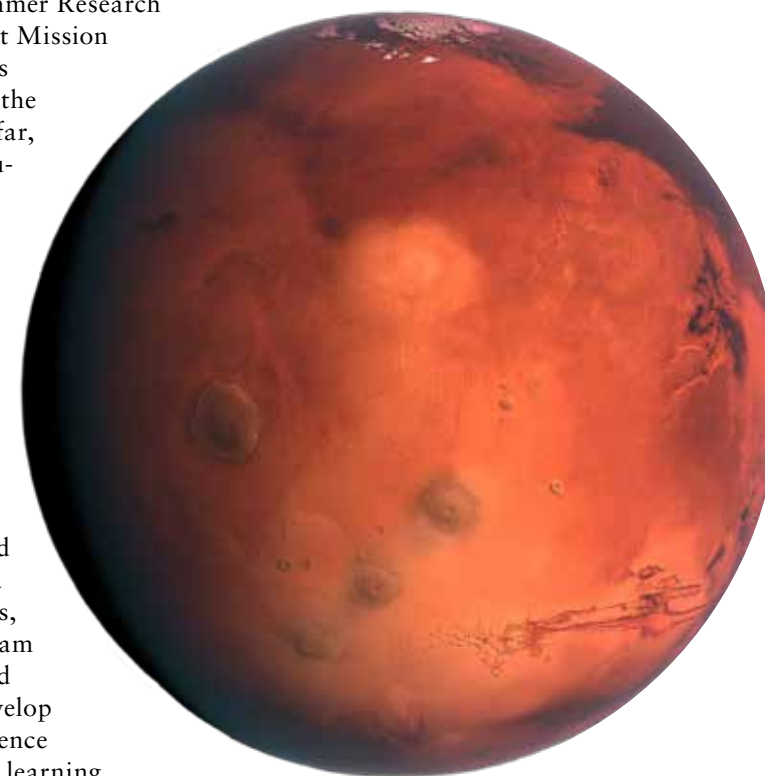
Baldrige applauded the program's goal of bringing together science and engineering. "It's really important that scientists and engineers be able to work together," Baldrige said, "because the scientists have the questions that they want to answer, and then the engineers build it."

Engineering junior Ben Harte felt fortunate to be chosen for the program. "Being involved with NASA and JPL, and all these really high-profile teams, is really cool. Right now, I'm looking at working toward a mechanical engineering degree and hopefully working somewhere like JPL on rocket systems satellites."

Environmental Science senior Morgan McDaniel appreciated "being able to meet all the different scientists and engineers at NASA," she said. "Ben and I also got to participate in a huge conference on Zoom in Colorado," she added.

"I think this project confirmed my interests and has helped me realize that I do really love research, and that I would like to continue and go to grad school," McDaniel added.

At the end of the program, students presented their mission to engineers from JPL. —*L.L.*



### STUDENTS EXPLORE THE SCIENCE OF BODY IMAGE IN MULTIRACIAL WOMEN

Seniors Hannah Stevenson and Ariel Canonizado participated in the 2020 Summer Research Program, which is largely composed of students who study biology and chemistry. But Stevenson and Canonizado, both Psychology majors, embarked upon a different path. And for them, the journey was personal.

Stevenson, who is African American and white, and Canonizado, who is Filipino, Mexican, and Salvadoran, titled their research project "The Relationship Between Body Satisfaction, Body Ideals, and Anxiety in Biracial and Multiracial Women." "With both of us being multiracial, it was deeply personal because we live the many experiences that our research revealed," said Canonizado. Their findings defined

common stressors, coping mechanisms, and anxiety about multiple body ideals.

"We discovered a lot of similar symptoms that the women listed: headaches, intrusive thoughts, heartburn, sweats, higher heart rates, and more."

Stevenson and Canonizado said biracial and multiracial body image, anxiety, and stress needs to be addressed as a mainstream issue at the intersection of culture and mental health.

"When I was listening to the women talk, I was thinking, 'I feel that, and I understand,'" said Stevenson. —*K.C.*



Seniors Ariel Canonizado (top) and Hannah Stevenson studied multiracial women's experiences.



### TELEA ILALIO '20 WINS AWARD FOR TOP MEN'S RUGBY PLAYER

Ask anyone about 2020 SMC graduate Payton Telea Ilalio's importance to the SMC men's rugby team, and you'll hear praise about his teamwork and true Lasallian spirit—not to mention compliments about the grad's "superb hands." Last spring, Telea Ilalio was unanimously named the 2019–2020 Rudy Scholz Award winner as the top men's collegiate rugby player in the U.S.

"Payton has been an extraordinary contributor to the fabric of the SMC community," said men's rugby coach Timothy O'Brien.

Telea Ilalio, who grew up in the Hunters Point district in S.F., was attracted to the College by the team's dedication to hard work. "The culture and tradition of Saint Mary's is working hard, keeping your head low, staying humble, and trying to be successful," he told Alex Goff of the *Goff Report*, who serves on the award's judging panel.

Telea Ilalio is currently enrolled in grad school at SMC working toward a master's in Management and Technology. College rugby is in a holding pattern as we watch how the pandemic plays out. —L.L.

### SAINT MARY'S ALUM EMBRACES GLOBAL COMMUNITY SERVICE

Former collegiate basketball star Diamon Simpson '09 has applied the SMC motto "Enter to Learn, Leave to Serve" on a global scale.

"After graduating from Saint Mary's, I entered training camp with the Golden State Warriors," said Simpson. "From there, I went to the development league of the NBA, and then accepted the opportunity to play professionally in Europe."

Simpson has played in Turkey, Australia, Israel, Spain, the Czech Republic, Russia, and Venezuela, and now plays in Argentina. "I didn't realize just how big international basketball is in these countries," said Simpson.

Off-court, Simpson embraces community service. "I work with

people who are less fortunate. In Australia, my team donated gifts for the holidays; in Turkey, we held camps for kids and donated gear; and in Spain, we worked with paraplegic athletes," said Simpson.

Simpson affirmed that Saint Mary's prepared him for his global experiences. "I really didn't know what to expect from college, but my professors, and especially the Socratic Seminars, opened my eyes and my heart to new perspectives," he said. "I am humbled to have experiences like this." —K.C.



TELEA ILALIO: REBECCA HARPER; PERFORMANCE CENTER: HALEY NELSON; COMMUNITY SERVICE: TODD FEINER



The women's soccer team conditions in the new Sports Performance Center.

## SMC Completes Sports Performance Center

Saint Mary's College Athletics continues to improve and invest in its student-athletes, as indicated by the official announcement of the completion of the Sports Performance Center last September.

Part of the second phase of the Student Athlete Performance Complex, the new Sports Performance Center boasts close to 7,000 square feet of workout space between its indoor and outdoor capacity.

At the opening of the facility, Athletics Chaplain Brother Chris Brady, FSC, '75 led a blessing, and Vice President for Intercollegiate Athletics Mike Matoso spoke about the generous support from all levels.

"We cannot thank our donors enough for their many gifts that led to this Sports Performance Center," Matoso said. "This facility is a key component for us in taking this Athletics Program to the next level."

The new weight room, named for donors JoAnne and Nicholas G. Moore '63, includes state-of-the-art Samson equipment, with 20 workstations, 10 benches, and nearly 10,000 kilograms of Olympic-caliber Gaels-branded plates. —Ryan Reggiani

## Saint Mary's Scores Gold Sustainability Award

Saint Mary's has earned Gold for its achievements in campus sustainability, being designated a Gold STARS (Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System) institution by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. The College received the highly coveted ranking based on factors that included examining sustainability and environmental justice.

"Being awarded a Gold STARS rating is a huge milestone," said SMC Sustainability Director Ann Drevno. "This accomplishment highlights all the great work across campus—from energy efficiency upgrades, to integrating sustainability into the curriculum, to student engagement initiatives. We have also launched Saint Mary's Climate Action Plan, which is another testament to the College's commitment to this important work."

Drevno shared that environmental and climate justice must include racial justice. "Sustainability is the ability to exist continually," said Drevno.

"Saint Mary's has long been committed to the responsibility of caring for our common home," says the plan. "We do this by protecting our common resources and advocating alongside communities who face the harshest impacts of global climate change." —K.C.

GERRY SERRANO

### GAEL INTERNS GET OUT THE VOTE

Last summer, the Politics Department earned two grants for its Gaels Vote 2020 initiative, which aimed to register every eligible student and achieve high voter turnout in November. The grants allowed 24 students to work as Gael Interns, offering bipartisan support to SMC students.

"Higher education has a responsibility to prepare students to become engaged participants in our democracy, and that includes, most importantly, exercising the right to vote," said Politics Professor Steve Wolpert, who directed the internships.

The interns felt comfortable working online during the pandemic. "Because of COVID-19, it is more difficult to connect with our peers, but social media has become a necessary tool in staying connected and informed," said third-year Politics major and Gael Intern Sarah Day. "Utilizing platforms like Instagram and Facebook has helped put a face to all of the informational emails, and created a community amongst the students who are interested in the election process."

The first grant, from Students Learn/Students Vote, funded a partnership with TurboVote that provided the College with a customized voter registration platform. The second grant, from Ask Every Student, offered funds to hire the student interns, who assisted SMC students with voter registration and voting by mail.

Wolpert said that we won't know how many SMC students voted until later this year. Saint Mary's has earned a Platinum Seal from the All IN Campus Democracy Challenge for increasing student voting. In the 2018 midterm election, our voting rate was 50 percent, well above the national student average of 39 percent. *Washington Monthly* has also named us one of America's Best Colleges for Student Voting 2020. —L.L.



Saint Mary's students held a sustainability fair on Earth Day in 2019.



## SMC AWARDED STEM GRANT FOR EDUCATORS



Saint Mary's College was awarded a \$75,000 National Science Foundation (NSF) Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Grant to help address the shortage of STEM teachers in high-need, diverse, and urban public schools. Led by Mary Candace Raygoza, assistant professor of Teacher Education, and Vidya Chandrasekaran, associate professor of Biology, the grant funds programs to encourage STEM majors and professionals to become K-12 mathematics and science teachers with the Mt. Diablo Unified School District.

"We will be bringing together partners from Saint Mary's three schools on campus to create undergraduate STEM teacher education programming that is centered around equity and social justice to prepare for teaching in local urban schools, and to teach culturally and linguistically diverse learners," said Raygoza. —K.C.



## Business School Gives Back

*The ChangeMakers event in 2019 attracted a large crowd.*

Last summer, nine Antioch nonprofits and small businesses hit hard by the COVID lockdown and subsequent economic downturn took part in a virtual ChangeMakers program. This fast-paced, two-part event brought companies together with the Saint Mary's community to troubleshoot business challenges. Last year's program attracted 80 participants and showed an outpouring of support from SMC alums that truly embodied our Lasallian values and the mission of the School of Economics and Business Administration (SEBA).

"The ChangeMakers events are a direct response toward helping businesses navigate this landscape using talent from our alumni, faculty, staff, and students," said SEBA Dean Elizabeth Davis. "Through these events, we create a dialogue among the participants providing innovative solutions for this economy now and beyond. The creativity and commitment of all the participants can be felt like an electric current even in the Zoom room! We are proud to be able to offer these services to the community."

Last year's companies included Fit Body Boot Camp, The Print Club, Hillcrest Restaurant and Taphouse, Markstein Sales Company, ServPro of Antioch, G Street Mercantile, DecisionViz, Service Pro Plumbers, and Opportunity Junction. "The team of professors, undergraduate, and postgraduate students shared a wealth of knowledge with me and helped create a three-step approach to help my business," said one participant. "I am so grateful for this opportunity and would highly recommend other small businesses that are struggling to participate."

ChangeMakers proves that the sense of community and social responsibility fostered at Saint Mary's stays with our alums long after they leave campus. —Robyn Walker

STEM GRANT: HALEY NELSON AND STEVE BABULIAK; SEBA: HALEY NELSON

## Professor of the Year Rosemary Graham Takes Learning to New Heights



*In 2017, Professor Rosemary Graham led her Jan Term class to Croagh Patrick in Ireland, the site of a historic pilgrimage.*

Professor of English and Creative Writing Rosemary Graham entered college thinking she was going to study government and politics. Then she took an American literature class that sparked a lifetime passion for the subject, which she shares with her students. Her passion for teaching and literature led to her being named Saint Mary's Professor of the Year for 2020–2021.

Graham, who has taught at Saint Mary's for more than 28 years, said she started teaching at a campus writing center while an undergraduate English major at Georgetown University. She worked under an inspiring professor who helped Graham find a part-time teaching job at Saint Agnes, a small private girls' school in Alexandria, Va.

"The pay was so low that I kept my college waitressing job," Graham said. She joked that for a while, she "was schoolmarm by day, barmaid by night."

"It was exhausting but exhilarating. I loved the classroom. After two years at Saint Agnes, I left to pursue a PhD. I wanted to read more, and more deeply, and to teach college."

As Graham began applying to jobs teaching 19th century American literature, Saint Mary's appealed to her as a small liberal arts college. At Saint Mary's, Graham said, "it's all about relationships." She loves that the College allows her "to meet students where they are." She believes classes and the relationships formed within them hold particular importance, especially today.

Graham has taught a number of courses in five different programs at the College, "each of them rewarding in its own

right." She's particularly passionate about the Jan Term course Ireland's Terrible Beauty, which she co-taught with Father Tom McElligott. Graham has also published scholarly articles and three novels. Her current novel in progress is called *Simple Lessons in Irish*. The historical novel is set in the west of Ireland and the East Coast of America in the early 20th century.

Her writing has also been recognized with fellowships and residencies at Hedgebrook, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, the Jentel Foundation, and the Tyrone Guthrie Centre in County Monaghan, Ireland.

Graham is also very proud of the numerous student successes she's inspired. Graham encouraged one of her former students, director of *Black Panther* Ryan Coogler, to pursue a career in film. Graham also noted, "Sometimes, it's just about getting students across the finish line" of a semester, which she finds rewarding in itself.

"When I reminisce about my undergraduate experience at Saint Mary's, Professor Graham's English 5 class always comes to mind," said Biochemistry senior Kaya Sanders. "Each time I left her class feeling so inspired and confident in myself as a student. Professor Graham is so compassionate, lively, and thoughtful. I am beyond grateful for all of her support and kindness."

The Saint Mary's community congratulates Professor Rosemary Graham and thanks her for her dedication to the College and its students. —Isabelle Kowell '23

# Solid Planning Leads to a Successful Fall Semester

BY LINDA LENHOFF / PHOTOGRAPHY BY HALEY NELSON



Professor Wayne Harter teaches Seminar under a pavilion.

The Saint Mary's community made good use of its summer vacation last year to get the campus ready for a successful fall semester in light of COVID-19. While we needed to hold most courses online for student safety, Saint Mary's faculty and staff went above and beyond to create innovative strategies that allowed students to learn in a variety of ways—and have a little fun doing it. While the leaves fell and the squirrels ran through the quad as usual, this fall had its own special look.

## CLASSROOMS FOR THE FUTURE

When Saint Mary's considered what it most needed to get ready for long-distance learning last fall, the IT Services EdTech Department made sure our classrooms would be state of the art for the pandemic—and beyond.

“We have what we call HyFlex classrooms: essentially, classrooms capable of being either hybrid or flexible,” said James Johnson, PhD, SMC's EdTech director. “HyFlex classrooms allow professors to teach to an in-person audience as well as a remote audience. The Media and Classroom teams implemented a pan, tilt, zoom [PTZ] camera to show in-class whiteboards; a microphone at the front of the classroom to help capture the voice of masked lecturers; as well as a dual-monitor setup that allows professors to teach both in-person and remote.”

“We also have rolling carts equipped with LCD screens, with a small computer to mimic an interactive screen for our larger classes, like our ensemble classes for Performing Arts,” said Johnson.

Performing Arts Chair and Dance Professor Dana Lawton was thrilled

to teach in the new high-tech environment. Lawton had 12 students socially distanced inside the classroom and six on Zoom. She said the technology allowed the class to stay engaged through peer feedback, a critical part of the dance class.

“I have nothing but amazing things to say about IT, and how supportive and responsive they were to our needs,” Lawton said. “They tricked out all of the dance studios and the Rec Center with large TVs and state-of-the-art camera equipment and microphones. We felt really heard and seen.”

## UNDER THE BIG TOPS

Perhaps most impressive when looking across campus were 12 large tented pavilions set up on the grass and decked out with efficient technology. Glee Club



1



2

1. Samaya Roberts '24 rides outside the Rec Center. 2. Diego Mizrachi '24 in calculus class in the Soda Center. 3. Students in a modern dance class. 4. The tricycle race at First Year Olympics. 5. Frisbee on the Chapel Lawn. 6. Diego Hammana '24 does homework. 7. Olivia Virgen '24 hangs out on campus. 8. Professor Joel Burley assists Bella Rawlings '24 in chem lab.



3



6



7



8

and Choir Professor Julie Ford, PhD, said her students took full advantage of singing at a safe distance from one another in the great outdoors. “The pavilions were well anchored, and because they curved down in an arc, you felt safe. The media cart had an enormous monitor, and the computer was really amazing and served in all of the ways I might use a smartboard. We invested in a sound system and got a mike for each singer and special singing masks—once we got it going, we were impressed,” she said.

“Since we were outside, we could safely be 10 or 12 feet apart with microphones,” Ford said. “We just figured it out, and everybody problem solved and had the can-do spirit.”

## SCIENCE MATTERS

The Science Department got down to

work planning so its students could continue to enjoy the hands-on learning experience Saint Mary's is known for. Plexiglass was installed in classrooms for safe, at-a-distance lab work. “We were able to offer in-person Chem 9 lab to residential students in a form that was nearly identical to the pre-pandemic version of the course,” said Chemistry Professor Joel Burley, PhD. “And we did it safely, without getting anybody sick.”

“It was very gratifying to maintain this one bit of normalcy while the rest of the world was falling apart,” Burley continued. “Faculty at Saint Mary's tend to really love their jobs, and we especially enjoy interacting with students. Holding in-person labs provided a reminder that some really good stuff was still chugging along, despite the pandemic.”

Bella Rawlings '24, a student in Chem 9,

appreciated having an in-person class during the pandemic. “It was easier to make friends when I met them in person rather than on Zoom,” she said. “I believe I enjoyed my in-person chemistry lab even more than I would have if we weren't in a pandemic for that reason. It was a nice alleviator to the typical restlessness of Zoom university!”

Burley looked forward to spring semester, when he planned to teach three in-person chemistry labs. “We will need to remain vigilant to keep everybody safe, but it should be a smoother process overall based on what we learned last semester,” he said.

Saint Mary's is grateful to have had no student-to-student COVID transmission last fall, with around 400 students living on campus. We thank our community for taking such good care.



# FIRST 50: Celebrating Women at Saint Mary's

In recognition of the 50th anniversary of women's admission to Saint Mary's, the College is hosting a series of events in the spring semester, with special emphasis in March during Women's History Month. In addition, hallmark SMC events—including the Distinguished Alumni Awards, Professor of the Year, Convocation, and Commencement—showcase notable alumnae and colleagues who are innovators and leaders in their communities.

Please enjoy this pictorial featuring a small selection of women from our 50 years of history who represent the College's mission of giving back to the community. They work to create social justice, show faith in the presence of God, and promote respect for all persons. We are grateful for the roles these women and so many others have played at Saint Mary's and beyond.



**SYLVIA (MARQUIS) HARPER '75**

First Black female commander of SFPD



**SPARKY HARLAN '79, MA**

CEO of Bill Wilson Center, fighting youth and family homelessness



**FRANCES SWEENEY '86, MA '08, PHD**

Vice President for Mission, first alumna to receive tenure as SMC faculty



**MARÍA ELENA DURAZO '75, JD**

California State Senator from the 24th District, General Vice President at UNITE HERE



**LISA CONGDON '90**

Fine artist, author, and illustrator



**KRISTINE SNOW MBA '90**

President, Cisco Capital at Cisco



**AMY VERNETTI '90**

Founder of Represented.us



**JENNY OLIN SHANAHAN '91, PHD**

Assistant Provost for High-Impact Practices at Bridgewater State University



**SISTER CLARE WAGSTAFFE CHS, PHD (1921–2007)**

Dean of Students, honorary Christian Brother, 1991



**CANDY DAWSON BOYD, PHD**

First Black professor to earn tenure at Saint Mary's, first Professor of the Year, 1992



**KIM VOGEL '89, MBA, CPA**

Board Director at TriCo Bank; former President and co-founder, BaseVenture



**FANNIE PRESTON, EDD**

First woman and Black Dean at Saint Mary's (School of Education), 1992



**MELISSA STAFFORD JONES '93, MPH**  
Executive Director of First 5 Association of California

**VALERIE FLEMING MA '03**

2006 Olympic silver medalist in women's bobsled



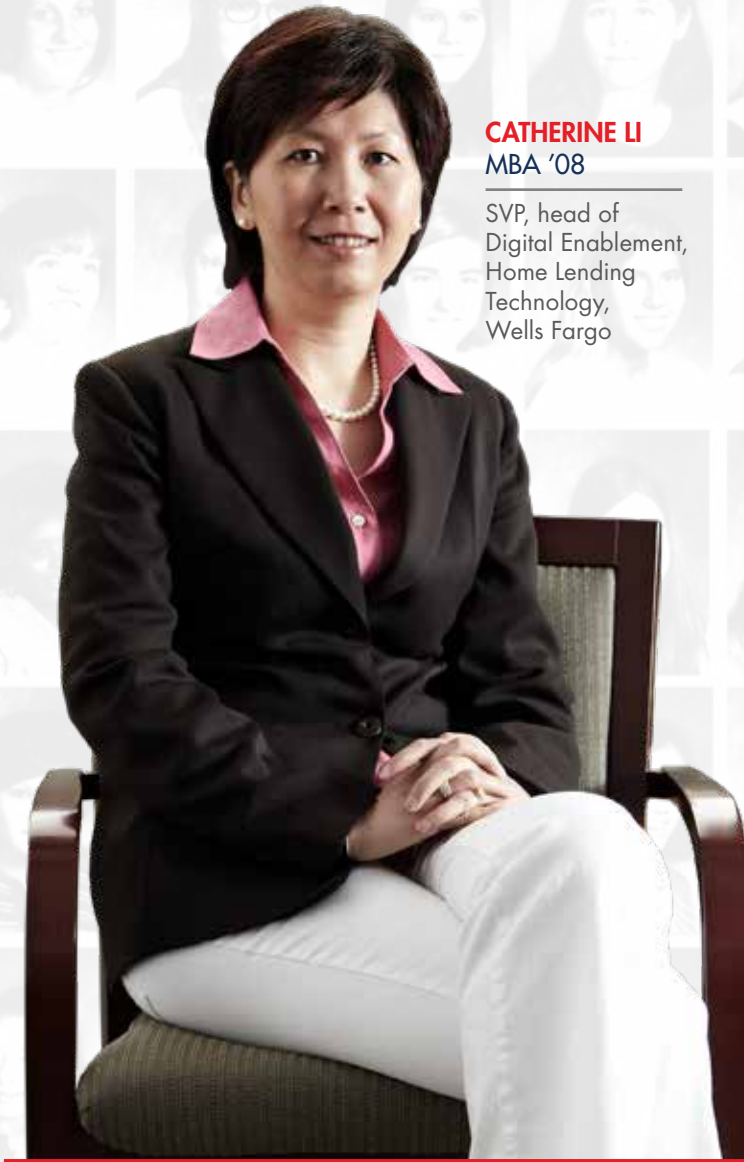
**CRISTEN LUNT '97, CPA**  
Vice President of Accounting and Corporate Controller at Clif Bar



**KATHY LITTLES '94, PHD**  
Saint Mary's Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs and Senior Diversity Officer



**MICHELLE PERRY HIGGINS '94**  
Principal of California Financial Advisors



**CATHERINE LI MBA '08**

SVP, head of Digital Enablement, Home Lending Technology, Wells Fargo



**SARA "SALLY" STAMPP, PHD**  
Psychology Professor Emeritus, first Provost of Saint Mary's, 2001



**MARY ANN GOMEZ ORTA MBA '02**  
President and CEO, Congressional Hispanic Leadership Institute



**MICHELLE JACKSON '04, JD**  
Executive Director of the Human Services Council, New York



**JENNIFER CHAMBLISS BERMAN MFA '01**  
Author of *New York Times* bestseller *The Unbreakable Code* in the *Book Scavenger* series



**ANGÉLICA GARCIA '98, EDD**  
First Chicana President of Berkeley City College



**TRACY SANDERS '00**  
Head women's basketball coach at Southern Utah University



**CATRIONA (SWEENEY) HARRIS '00**  
CEO of Uproar PR, CEO of the Year/*Orlando Business Journal*



**STEPHANIE SHRIEVE-HAWKINS MA '00**  
Director of Athletics at San Francisco State University



**BARI A. WILLIAMS MBA '03, JD**

COO, Bandwagon Fan Club



**GABY DALKIN '08**

Author, CEO, and founder, What's Gaby Cookin' blog



**DENISE WITZIG, PHD**

Coordinator of SMC's Women's and Gender Studies Program, Professor of the Year, 2018



# Into the Future Meet Richard Plumb, Saint Mary's Next President

BY LEEANNE JONES / PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK BROWN

In his talks with the Saint Mary's community, Richard Plumb, PhD, who will become the 30th president of the College in July, often shares a personal story that conveys how much one teacher can positively impact a student's life.

When he was a high school senior struggling with academics, young Plumb took a career assessment test that suggested he pursue engineering. Intrigued, he told his guidance counselor that he wanted to study the subject. She replied: "Don't bother applying for engineering; no engineering school would ever accept you," Plumb recalled.

Plumb next headed to Syracuse University as an undeclared major, having been recruited by the rowing team. On his first day, he came upon a distinguished-looking man in the quad who struck up a conversation. When Plumb mentioned his counselor told him he wasn't smart enough for engineering, that man changed the direction of Plumb's life. "It turns out, he was the associate dean for the College of Engineering," said Plumb. "He transferred me into engineering by lunchtime. Four years later, I graduated at the top of my class."

Plumb was the first person in his family to graduate from college, and his parents weren't sure how to help. But one professor made an impact that let Plumb find his passion. He tries to pay this forward through his work in higher education.

"I'm a servant-leader. I got that early on; it's not about me," Plumb said. "How do I help others? How do I empower them? How do I help them achieve their maximum God-given potential? If I can do that, then I've been successful. To me, success is seeing others succeed."

Plumb's journey from undeclared undergrad to college president began with bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees in electrical engineering—all from Syracuse. He taught at the University of Kansas; Binghamton University of New York, where he was department chair; and Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, where he became dean of the Seaver College of Science and Engineering. He is now completing his seventh year as the executive vice president and provost of the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn.



**"The faculty and staff have this enormous wealth of knowledge, and we need to be partnered to solve challenges. We're equal partners in this institution."**

Plumb is excited about his next leap. "I'm really looking forward to warm weather," he joked about returning to California, away from subzero temperatures. But he's equally serious about the move: "I'm looking forward to meeting the Saint Mary's community, the trustees, Brothers, the faculty, staff, alumni, and students...just the whole experience—and listening to their hopes and dreams for the institution."

Plumb, a champion of shared governance, believes the Saint Mary's community needs to work together. He says he is ready to take on big decisions by following the moral compass of the Lasallian principles as well as seeking input from a diverse range of stakeholders.

"I still consider myself first and foremost a professor," said Plumb, who taught for 32 years. "The faculty and staff have this enormous wealth of knowledge, and we need to collaborate to solve challenges. We're equal partners in this institution."

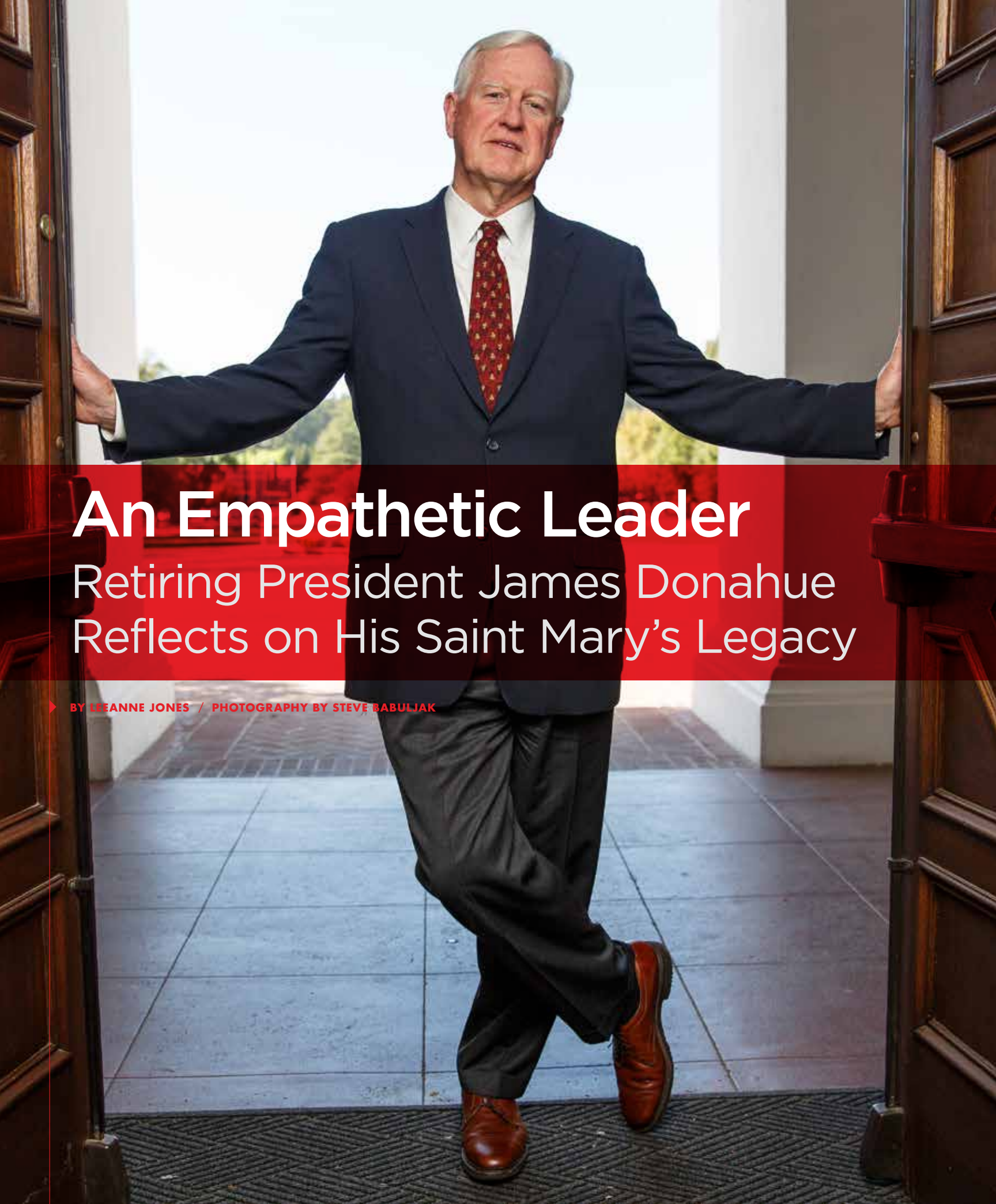
Plumb feels particularly drawn to Saint Mary's core values of promoting education and social equity. "One of my primary responsibilities will be to ensure that the institution stays true to its Catholic, Lasallian, and liberal arts traditions," said Plumb. "How do we continue to enhance that going forward? I think a school like Saint Mary's, considering its location in

the Bay Area, can be a leader in social justice, partnering with corporations and nonprofits, and working together to address some of society's big problems."

One immediate challenge facing Plumb will be managing the post-pandemic environment to provide a quality education that is affordable and sustainable. "I have a responsibility to ensure that Saint Mary's is thriving into the future. The decisions we make in the next five to 10 years will impact the institution 50 years from now," Plumb said.

Plumb was appointed upon the unanimous recommendation of the Saint Mary's College Board of Trustees after an extensive yearlong search. "Richard not only understands the issues facing higher education today, he demonstrated to us how a university can succeed in today's environment," said Kim Vogel, Saint Mary's trustee and search committee co-chair. "His considerable experience in fundraising, program development, and diversity initiatives made it clear that his unifying vision can lead Saint Mary's to the next level."

Please join us in welcoming President Richard Plumb to our university beginning this July.



# An Empathetic Leader

## Retiring President James Donahue Reflects on His Saint Mary's Legacy

BY LEEANNE JONES / PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVE BABULJAK

For James Donahue, serving as president of Saint Mary's isn't just a job; it's a vocation. During his nearly eight years at the school's helm, Donahue has felt a strong, often divine summons to find ways to balance tradition and innovation. He has spent time in the College Chapel almost daily to ask questions and seek direction through quiet prayer and meditation.

"I'm always trying to discern what I'm being called to do, and I strive to make careful decisions based on the specific circumstances at hand," he said.

Donahue, who is retiring in June, has been reflecting a great deal on how the College has shaped him, as well. The role of president has repeatedly stretched his thinking, he said. He strives to uphold the school's Lasallian, Catholic, and liberal arts principles while also meeting the current academic and career needs of students, faculty, staff, and administrators—as well as guide the institution confidently forward into the changing higher education landscape.

"Saint Mary's has helped me understand that vocation is very complex, always expanding, always asking more," Donahue said. "It's not a quest for perfection. It's about being the best we can be and reaching out to something more than what we are experiencing right now."

Donahue says he's deliberately supported all efforts to keep vocation at the forefront of the Saint Mary's experience, and that has meant asking life's biggest questions. He did this by teaching the Collegiate Seminar, holding public forums (such as the one with William M. Sullivan, author of *Liberal Learning as a Quest for Purpose*), and inviting alum Mahershala Ali '96 to deliver the 2016 graduation address right before he won two Academy Awards.

"Donahue has led with empathy, vision, and a clear commitment to the school's religious values," said Vice President for Mission Frances Sweeney '86, MA '08, PhD, who once co-taught the Collegiate Seminar with Donahue. "For the faculty and staff, this can be seen in how he championed us to learn and live our Lasallian values in setting priorities, making decisions, and conducting our work. For the students, he has invited our entire community to consider our education as one that encourages regular reflection and questions, with an aim to help students discern their calling, for themselves and for how they will be in the world."

Donahue has been a staunch advocate for Saint Mary's and will be remembered for leading the most successful Capital Campaign in the College's history. The Campaign for Saint Mary's: *Defining the Future* launched publicly in 2018 with the goal of raising \$125 million to invest in academic excellence; support student scholarships; strengthen the Lasallian, Catholic mission; and fund operations. It exceeded its goal by nearly \$11 million, raising \$136 million. Donahue has focused recently on a three-year initiative, the SMC Scholarship Initiative: Students First. As part of this effort, Saint Mary's announced the James A. Donahue Presidential Endowed Scholarship, which leverages public and private funding to provide full-tuition scholarships for new students with strong academic promise and high financial need, in an effort to attract the best students to Saint Mary's.

As most anyone on campus will tell you, Donahue is a warm, friendly people person, and he says some of his best decisions have involved hiring the right individuals. He filled several key administrative roles in his tenure. "Any responsible and ethical organization realizes it's about people," he said. "I've been focused on making sure the people we have here are the right people. I feel very good about leaving Saint Mary's in capable hands."

He has also worked hard to elevate Saint Mary's among larger academic institutions. In his October 2013 inaugural address, he expressed a desire to take the College's reputation from hidden gem to polished gem. "I wanted Saint Mary's to be explicit, to be known, for it to be very clear that what we do here is unique, in terms of the personal attention, quality education, and development of the whole person," he said.

While Donahue leaves Saint Mary's in a good place, the next president will surely face unique challenges, such as navigating the long-term impact of a global pandemic on higher education and encouraging common ground in a polarized time. But Donahue has helped ease the transition in at least one significant way. As the first non-Christian Brother to serve as president, he built the relational bridge between his office and the Christian Brothers that future lay leaders will walk and grow to serve the College for years to come.

Looking ahead, Donahue plans to spend more time with family and start consulting in the areas of professional ethics and Catholic higher education. "I want to be able to take what I've learned over my professional life and give it back to others," he said. He also hopes to remain connected to the Saint Mary's community. In that vein, Saint Mary's has recently announced that both Donahue and his wife, Jane Purinton—a dedicated educator herself—have been named lifelong alumni, which suits the couple well.

"I love being a Gael," Donahue said.

*"What we do here is unique, in terms of personal attention and quality education..."*



High Potential Program Mentor Synclaire Lee '22 chats with President Donahue.

## SMC Scholarship Initiative: Students First

Under President James Donahue's leadership for nearly eight years, Saint Mary's has fortified its commitment to provide comprehensive liberal arts education to students from all backgrounds and with limited means. Saint Mary's is proud to build on this work by introducing the SMC Scholarship Initiative: Students First to help close the gap for students struggling to meet tuition costs by raising \$10 million by June 30, 2023, in support of financial aid. This effort will provide critical annual and endowed scholarships, and leverage existing scholarships for even greater impact.

Scholarship programs have a dramatic impact not only on students' ability to stay in school but also on their ability to stay focused on their academic studies while they are matriculated, giving them a much greater chance of success. Saint Mary's already combines institutional funding with existing donor-funded scholarships to offer financial aid to students—but the need is growing. As part of this special funding initiative, Saint Mary's has created two new scholarships.

**The James A. Donahue Presidential Endowed Scholarship.** In honor of President Donahue's leadership as he

prepares to retire, this endowed scholarship for new Gaels, including first-year and transfer students, leverages public and private funding to provide full-tuition scholarships for students with academic promise and high financial need.

**The Spirit of Saint Mary's Annual Scholarship.** This scholarship provides emergency tuition assistance for current students experiencing temporary financial hardships so they may remain enrolled and pursue their Saint Mary's educational goals.

The need to increase scholarship opportunities for our students is tremendous. Currently, 93 percent of Saint Mary's students receive some form of financial aid; 25 percent of these come from low-income households as demonstrated by Pell grant eligibility. A robust scholarship program helps us offer enrollment to the widest possible pool of applicants regardless of their financial need. This keeps Saint Mary's competitive, diverse, and vibrant, and it is one of the noblest expressions of our shared Lasallian mission. William Mullen, vice provost for Enrollment and Communications, notes, "Increasing financial aid support from donor-funded scholarships

enables us to attract the best and brightest students, allows low-income students to afford a Saint Mary's education, and ensures that finances do not stand in the way of graduation."

We invite your partnership in the Scholarship Initiative: Students First. Please visit [stmrys-ca.edu/giving/smc-scholarship-initiative-students-first](http://stmrys-ca.edu/giving/smc-scholarship-initiative-students-first), use the envelope inserted in this magazine, or call the Advancement Office at (925) 631-4509 to show your support or learn more. —Carolyn Otis Catanzaro



SCHOLARSHIP INITIATIVE: HALEY NELSON



### MARCIA SYUFY ON SUPPORTING SAINT MARY'S

For almost four decades, Marcia Syufy has been helping Saint Mary's College students through the Raymond J. Syufy Annual Scholarship. Established by Marcia and her late husband, Raymond J. Syufy '40, the fund has provided almost \$700,000 to deserving students in need. Marcia has had a long history with the College. Not only did her husband graduate as a Gael, but sons Raymond '84 and Joseph '87, and her daughter-in-law, Michelle '88, did as well.

"With the high cost of living in the Bay Area and education costs rising, we wanted to ensure that students who wished to attend Saint Mary's had a chance. Now more than ever, scholarship support is critical and is one way of helping those families achieve this goal," said Marcia.

In addition to their scholarship support, the Syufy family's impact can be seen all across campus, from athletics, to recreation, to the Performing Arts, and even the residence halls. The student experience is enriched by their generous and longtime loyal support. —Mary Poppingo



SCHOLARSHIP INITIATIVE: ROBERT WAGNER, HALEY NELSON, GERRY SERRANO



### SCHOLARSHIP BENEFITS BUSINESS STUDENTS

Executive MBA Program student Adrian Cooper '22 is the current recipient of the William L'Heureux MBA Endowed Scholarship from the School of Economics and Business Administration. Adrian has served in the U.S. military and received his Bachelor of Science degree in Advertising from San Francisco's Art Institute of California. Wanting to round out his art degree with business courses, he enrolled at Saint Mary's.

Art and education have been critical to shaping who Adrian is and all he does. He likes to quote B.B. King: *The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you.* "This quote drives me in everything that I do," said Adrian. "As a lifelong learner. As a student. As a professional. Never Stop Learning."

Over the next five years, Adrian would like to join a great firm that works with data and market research, and he'd like to focus on entrepreneurship opportunities. He hopes to eventually work as a brand marketing consultant to help small businesses regain their footing after the COVID-19 pandemic. —M.P.



From far left: Dance students enjoy safe, in-person classes in the fall; students take class outdoors by the pavilions; residents participate in outdoor activities.



From top left: Mykah Montgomery MBA '11; Stephen Perez '03; David R. Ford; Napala Pratini '12; Bob Kozlowski '50; Jane Purinton and James Donahue; Dayna Chatman '05; Emily Redfern '17.

## Presenting the Distinguished Alumni Awards for 2021

The 2021 Distinguished Alumni Awards, which were held virtually on March 6, honored several extraordinary Gaels for their service to their community as well as to Saint Mary's.

Mykah Montgomery MBA '11 was named Alumna of the Year for her community work in the Bay Area. She is the fourth alumna and first Black woman to win the award. Montgomery is the founder of Mylaan Entertainment and Leaders are Readers, an organization committed to "gifting knowledge" that promotes a love of self and others, a love for community, entrepreneurship, self-betterment, and philanthropy. She received the Jefferson Award for Public Service in recognition of Leaders are Readers' literacy advocacy efforts.

Stephen Perez '03, RN, PhD, earned the Meritorious Service Award, which goes to an alum who has exemplified the mission of the College for commitment to service in his or her community or the College. He is a lieutenant in the U.S. Public Health Service and a nurse

epidemiologist with the Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention, Transmission, and Molecular Epidemiology team at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As part of the COVID-19 response, Perez was responsible for providing clinical and infection prevention consultations to a variety of programs and response efforts.

The Saint John Baptist de La Salle Award went to David R. Ford, PhD, Ford, who came to Saint Mary's in 2003, has served as the executive assistant to the past three presidents (Brother Craig Franz, Brother Ronald Gallagher, and James Donahue). His primary role is to support the work of the president, Board of Trustees, and Cabinet. The De La Salle Award goes to a member of the faculty or staff who has, over a period of years, demonstrated a personal commitment to the students of Saint Mary's above and beyond his/her employee responsibilities.

The Emerging Leader Award recipient is Napala Pratini '12. In 2019, she co-founded Habitual, a company building digital pre-diabetes and diabetes remission



programs. Pratini has raised money from prominent U.K. angel investors as well as leading London venture capitalist funds Seedcamp and MMC.

The rest of the class consists of Bob Kozlowski '50 (Golden Gael Award), James Donahue and Jane Purinton (Honorary Alumni), Dayna Chatman '05, PhD (Signum Fidei Award), and Emily Redfern '17 (Global Gael Award).

—Zack Farmer '08

## Richard Ladner '65 Earns Public Service Award

Distinguished computer scientist Richard Ladner '65, PhD, has focused his career on helping those with disabilities—so it's no surprise that he was named a 2020 recipient of the National Science Board's Public Service Award. The award goes to individuals who have made substantial contributions to increasing public understanding of science and engineering. Ladner is a Professor Emeritus in the Paul G. Allen School of Computer Science and Engineering at the University of Washington, where he has been on the faculty since 1971. His research centers on developing technological tools to aid people with disabilities, including making sign language communication possible through wireless cell phone technology.

"It is wonderful to be recognized for making science relevant to the public, not just for scientific achievements," said Ladner. "Science would wither in the United States without the support of the government through the National Science Foundation and other agencies. That support would not be there without people

who understand and can communicate the benefits of scientific research. In my case, the award is for my advocacy and programs for including people with disabilities in computer science."

Ladner, whose late twin brother, David ('65), attended Saint Mary's with him, was inspired in his career goals by his parents. "My parents were deaf and fluent in American Sign Language," he said. "From personal experience I saw the barriers they faced in their lives and how technology might help them. "I realized that more needed to be done to include those same people in the actual design and implementation of these access technologies."

Ladner discovered his passion for research as a math major at Saint Mary's.

"I was fortunate to have had a wonderful class taught by Brother Alfred Brousseau. For some crazy reason, I asked him to supervise my senior project. He asked me to solve a problem that has never been solved before. That was my first taste of research, and I got the bug. I can't tell you how many technical problems I worked on during my career, but only a few have I completely solved. I have to thank Saint Mary's for a great education that included doing research." —Linda Lenhoff

### FATIMA SILVA '04 ADVOCATES FOR THE UNDERSERVED

Growing up, Fatima Silva '04 heard her family and friends joke that she would one day be a lawyer. A family tragedy during her teenage years gave Silva her first experience in a courtroom and inspired her to pursue law—and give a voice to those who didn't have one.

"In my early teens, my brother died while crossing the railroad tracks," Silva said. "I witnessed my parents endure a difficult legal battle against one of the world's largest transportation companies so that other families wouldn't suffer the same tragic fate as ours," she added.

"We were from a lower-middle-class family, so seeing them fight without money or resources, when no one cared or would listen, really inspired me to be a people's lawyer."

After earning her law degree from Pace University School of Law, Silva began working as a criminal justice attorney in 2012 and launched her own firm, Silva Law, in 2018.

"One of the most sacred principles of the American criminal justice system is that a defendant is innocent until proven guilty," she said. "But if you have ever been a defendant in a criminal case, it feels as if you are guilty until proven innocent. The process can be confusing, terrifying, and uncertain."

"It is an honor to advocate for people," Silva said. She is also the co-host of the TV show *Reasonable Doubt* on Investigation Discovery, which re-explores murder cases where convicted individuals maintain their innocence. Silva credits working with SMC's Catholic Institute for Lasallian Social Action leadership team with helping her to cultivate her passion. "Service work is a part of who I am. It's how I find value in my life." —Zack Farmer '08



## Emily Redfern '17 Completes a Year of Service in Lebanon



Emily Redfern '17 has practiced the Lasallian values she learned at Saint Mary's around the world—most recently, spending a year in Lebanon with the Fratelli Project. The Fratelli 2020 COVID-19 Humanitarian Aid Project is an initiative aimed at responding immediately to the unfolding COVID-19 crisis devastating the country of Lebanon, in particular the refugee communities at the margins.

A former International and Global Studies major with a concentration in social justice, Redfern served in Lebanon for 11 months beginning in fall 2019. Throughout the year, Redfern's duties varied but centered on the refugees. "From the time of lockdown, the primary work we did was humanitarian: creating 50-pound food and hygiene boxes with items to help families for two weeks. We

were responsible for purchasing supplies for well over 1,000 people. We did the same style project focusing on delivering diapers and infant formula; brought on a pediatrician to care for ages newborn to 48 months; [and made] food and hygiene boxes and confinement bags for kids, something to keep them busy.

"During my time there, because of the economic situation, we also started working with Lebanese families who were doubling down into poverty rates," Redfern added. Redfern was also nearby for the explosion of ammonium nitrate in Beirut in August and helped with rescue efforts.

Redfern detailed the challenges in a report she wrote on the Fratelli Project website. "This year, the challenge was monumental. With a pandemic sweeping the globe, the Lebanese country, already

crippled by a collapsing financial system, political revolutions, and crumbling infrastructure, was teetering on the brink of collapse."

Now a graduate student at Boston College, where she earned a scholarship for her volunteer work, Redfern reflected on how Saint Mary's gave her the skills to pursue social work. She credits the Mission and Ministry Center for "the Lasallian formation I received. How we do service in a positive, equitable, and sustainable way informs my entire ethos of being a volunteer. It definitely informed how I chose to spend my time in Lebanon and how I chose to create relationships with my students and their families; and coming from a place of equity and checking my privilege and understanding," she said. —L.L.

## BE'ANKA ASHAOLU '08 SHARES HER HEART AND SOUL

Sisters Be'Anka Ashaolu '08 and Jeronica Macey knew they wanted to make a meaningful contribution to the social fabric of their hometown. Their longtime dream turned into a reality last year when they opened Nirvana Soul, the first Black-women-owned coffee shop in San Jose, which features bright surroundings, a collection of local artwork, and an important footprint within a growing downtown region.

"It means everything to do something in your hometown," Ashaolu said. "Everyone kind of now feels like they have a piece of this place. With tech [companies] and everything, you feel like you're pushed out a little bit. This was a good reminder that we're still here, we can still do our things, and San Jose still has this heart and soul."

Ashaolu, who acts as the marketing arm of Nirvana Soul, worked for a long time with a retail tech company, where

she learned how businesses are built. Their 15-year-old idea for Nirvana Soul started to take form two years ago.

"We had a vision party with some friends of ours at the end of 2018, and that's when we put on our vision boards, we're going to open Nirvana Soul," Ashaolu said.

They secured the location in March 2019, just ahead of the pandemic. "We knew we wanted to contribute to having something more to do here [in San Jose]," Ashaolu said. "I think everyone is feeling the energy that was paused by the pandemic."

Ashaolu became committed to giving back to the community during her volunteering days at SMC. "I think about Saint Mary's pretty often...because of Enter to Learn, Leave to Serve," she said. "That motto has stayed with me literally my entire career." —Z.F.



## Angélica Garcia '98 Named Berkeley City College President

Angélica Garcia '98, EdD, has achieved many milestones during her academic journey, which began when she entered Saint Mary's as a first-generation student in 1994. A Liberal and Civic Studies major, Garcia was committed to pursuing a career in education. After graduating from Saint Mary's, Garcia earned a master's degree in Social Work and Administration from San Diego State University and a doctorate in Educational Leadership from San Francisco State University. Reflecting upon her academic accomplishments, Garcia shared that she is grateful that her journey aligns with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s words: "Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education."

Garcia's professional career includes her appointment as president of Berkeley City College in 2019—the first Chicana to lead the college. In its public announcement, the Peralta Community College District described Garcia as "an effective and collaborative higher education leader with an emphasis on innovation, social justice, and equity while promoting academic excellence."



Garcia's experience as an educator, social worker, faculty member, and administrator has allowed her to create institutional change through focused leadership and meaningful collaborations. "I believe pursuing higher education is an act of liberation, especially for historically minoritized communities," said Garcia. "Berkeley City College students are part of a thriving community, which mirrors the

Bay Area's ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic diversity. I am energized by the diversity among students and the local community." Garcia's tenure of academic leadership also includes previous roles as vice president of Student Services at Skyline College and director of the High Potential Program at Saint Mary's.

Committed to addressing issues of educational equity and access, Garcia serves as a member of the Student Centered Funding Formula Oversight Committee, appointed by the speaker of the Assembly; member of the statewide California Community College Guided Pathways Advisory Committee; president of the Executive Board for the Chief Student Services Officers Association; board member of the Latina Leadership Network for the California Community Colleges; and co-founder of COLEGAS for Latinx professionals in the California Community Colleges.

In 2019, Garcia was recognized with the Saint Mary's Signum Fidei Award for exceptional participation in the goals of higher education. She is the first woman of color to receive this award. —Kay Carney

## CARLOS TORRES '16 TURNS HIS SMC PASSIONS INTO GOLD

Carlos Torres '16 has successfully combined his passion for communication with the business savvy he learned at Saint Mary's—and he has the shiny gold hardware to prove it. Last year, Torres earned an Emmy award for his role as director-editor of online and cable TV program *Sunday to Sunday*, hosted by retired SMC Communication Professor Father Mike Russo. Shortly after graduating from Saint Mary's, Torres started CutFocus, a film production company, with his business partner, Jake Slonecker.

"Saint Mary's played a huge part in my journey of developing my business," said Torres. "I went into Saint Mary's as a transfer student from Los Medanos College and majored in Communication, knowing that I wanted to develop the skill sets needed to be a business owner. I also knew that if I could be a great communicator, I could be a great leader; and if I were a great

leader, I could run my own business."

During his first semester at Saint Mary's, Torres was hired as the coordinator of creative multimedia at the Joseph Alioto Recreation Center. He also worked as the videographer for the Communication Department. "Working at Saint Mary's reaffirmed that being in the film production world was where I wanted to be," Torres said.

"I had very little knowledge about starting a business, but SMC provided me with resources from the School of Economics and Business Administration and various departments that helped guide me in the right direction," Torres said. "We were even hired by SMC's Comm Department, CILSA, School of Economics and Business Administration, and other departments to create videos. Having SMC as a client helped us get on our feet during our first year of business." —L.L.



CARLOS TORRES: KAREN TORRES; COMMUNITY PRESIDENT: CALI GODLEY

**i** Degree Key  
**ECR** Education Credential  
**EdD** Doctor of Education  
**EE** Extended Education  
**EMBA** Executive MBA  
**HON** Honorary  
**MBA** Graduate Business  
**MC** Counseling  
**ME** Graduate Education  
**MFA** Fine Arts  
**ML** Leadership  
**MLS** Liberal Studies  
**MS** Science  
**MT** Theology and Religious Studies  
**N** Nursing  
**P** Paralegal Certificate

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## 1961

**1 Armando B. Rendon** is the founder/editor of Somos en escrito Literary Foundation Press, a Chicano-owned nonprofit publishing house dedicated to Latino literature. Its first two books in 2020 won international awards; the third book is by Saint Mary's Professor Alvaro Ramirez. The press also operates *Somos en escrito Magazine*, an online literary publication. Armando welcomes emerging and established Latino/a writers across the full range of genres, in English, Spanish, and/or Spanglish. He writes novels for young adults; four of Armando's first five books have won international awards, and all are available in paperback or e-book. He lives in Kensington.

## 1970

**2 J. George Doerr** and his wife, **Kathie**, enjoy traveling in retirement and are shown here whale watching in Alaska. George had a 42-year career with the FDIC and retired in 2012.

## 1971

**3 Professor Tony Shelton** retired in 2020 after 41 years at Cornell University, where he was an international professor of Entomology. He and his wife, Ann, now split their time between the Finger Lakes Region of New York, where Tony can sail and bike for eight months, and Santa Barbara, where he doesn't have to shovel snow.

## 1975

**4 Maurice Harper**, retired principal, San Francisco Unified School District, is currently director of Youth Ministry at St. Columba Church in Oakland.

## 1981

**5 Jeffrey Hall** has been practicing law for 17 years. Prior to his legal career, he worked as a CPA for 20 years. He's married to his college sweetheart, Laura (Franz) '81, and they have a daughter, Courtney, 24. After 25 years of service in the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve (commander) and as a JAG officer, he continues to serve in the California

National Guard JAG office in Sacramento. Jeff works as a lawyer specializing in elder law, estate planning, and trust litigation. He recently published his first book, *Traditional Estate Planning Is Finished*, which is available online at Amazon.com. Laura is retired from Aetna Healthcare after 40 years of service and enjoys working with local charities. She is also a faithful supporter of the Gaels men's and women's basketball teams.

## 1984

**6 Gina (Coiffi) Loud** reports Gael classmates Therese (Wehan) and Michael Hall '88, and Cindy Rogers-Goldstein joined Gina and Ted on their wedding day. The couple met working for Congressman Frank Pallone in January 1987. Decades later, they met again and realized they had a love story. Both Gina and Ted continue to have careers centered around government relations, and Gina is currently senior manager of public affairs for Chiesi Global Rare Diseases.

## 1989

**7 Jeffrey Peters** is happy to announce that after starting as a volunteer firefighter and finishing as the fire chief 30 years later, he will retire from the Livermore-Pleasanton Fire Department in April 2021. Jeffrey said, "SMC played a big role in who I am today. Thank you Gaels!"

## 1998

**8 Brian (Brian-Ray Michael) Stanley** has been appointed senior vice president and chief operating officer of the Energy Foundation. Based in San Francisco, it is the largest foundation focused exclusively on clean energy in the United States. The foundation grants roughly \$90 million annually to support energy optimization, clean power, and transportation and expand markets for clean energy.

## 2000

**9 Carolyn Hunter**, a Tetra Tech program director and communication manager with 20 years' experience, led the team that won a \$125 million contract for emer-

gency response and recovery services with the U.S. Postal Service in February 2020. Under this contract, Tetra Tech will use innovative technologies and advanced analytics to support operational and emergency environmental services for the USPS.

## 2007

**10 (Herbert) Dan Pease** recently joined CAVU Wealth Advisors in Walnut Creek and obtained the Certified Wealth Strategist designation. Using his breadth of roles in the financial services industry, Dan provides his expertise in comprehensive wealth management with an emphasis on taxes, investments, insurance, life income planning, and charitable giving. He sits on the board of The First Tee of Contra Costa and is an ambassador for the Concord Chamber of Commerce and a board member for the De La Salle Alumni Association. Dan lives in the East Bay with his wife, Catherine, and two children, Ryan and Summer.

## 2010

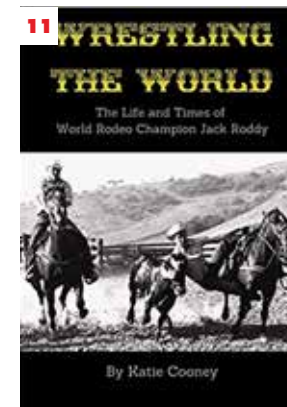
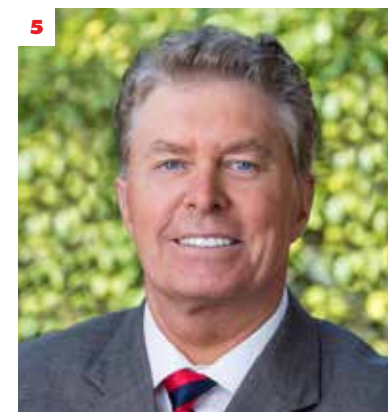
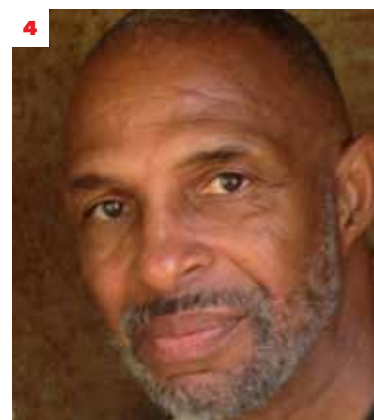
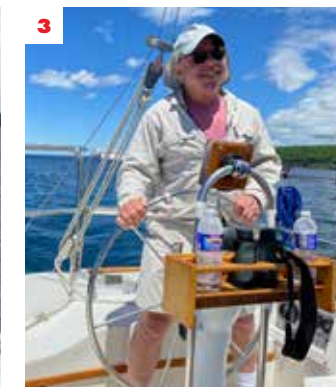
**11 Katie Cooney's** book about her father, *Wrestling the World: The Life and Times of World Rodeo Champion Jack Roddy*, came out in 2019. Jack fought the Dairy Diversion program and eco-terrorism and mentored future rodeo cowboys into champions.

## 2019

**12 Jordan Pastor** is on the way to publishing his third novel on Aug. 12 this year. The book, titled *Red Elk*, is as much a political discourse as it is a collection of short stories in the psychological thriller genre. His team of four, since publishing *Never Say Forgotten* in 2018, has increased to 28 people, some of whom are fellow Gaels. Jordan has found his experience at SMC quite enriching, especially noting the help and encouragement of retired Professor Ed Tywoniak.

## 2020

**13 Kendra Ray Carr**, EdD, completed her doctorate in Educational Leadership and celebrated the birth of baby Gael Sameer!







## Remembering Brother Martin John Yribarren

Brother Martin John Yribarren, FSC, '71, PhD, who passed away on Monday, March 8 of this year, brought music and laughter to our College for 26 years, and we will miss these treasured sounds. Many of us often took a shortcut through the Chapel—even if it was out of our way—to hear him play the 3,649-pipe organ, of which he was a master. Our campus will be sadly quieter without him.

Brother Martin enrolled at Saint Mary's in 1967 after years at Mont LaSalle in Napa as a novice Christian Brother. The Integral Program called to him, and sports and music were his abiding passions. "My freshman year, one semester I had something like 22 units of class, was taking piano at Holy Names, and was on the freshman basketball team," he said in a 2014 interview.

Brother Martin taught and coached basketball for almost two decades at Cathedral High School in Los Angeles, where he served as principal from 1985 to 1987. He earned a Master of Arts degree from Cal State Los Angeles and finished his PhD in Music Theory at USC, writing a detailed analysis of César Franck's major pieces for organ.

Saint Mary's drew Brother Martin back in 1995 to become an Integral tutor and Collegiate Seminar instructor, as well as campus organist and founding member of the John S. Cummins Institute for Catholic Thought, Culture, and Action. He taught most of the courses in the Integral program and loved rediscovering Euclid with new groups of students. Brother Martin also enjoyed hiking in the hills, cooking, and fishing, along with singing, leading, and composing choral music for liturgies and special events. He liked to say that his personal interests were related to his Basque genes.

Brother Martin also launched the Sacred Music Choir for faculty and staff. Among his many gifts is the complicated and beautiful musical score he wrote to our Lasallian refrain, "Let us remember...that we are in the holy presence of God," performed by our choir during De la Salle week and now known worldwide.

Brother Martin mentored numerous students in their academic, personal, and spiritual growth, introducing them to the wonders of music and its power to elevate their senses, and their participation in Mass. As we honor Brother Martin, we are grateful for the enthusiasm, critical intellectual perspectives, camaraderie, and joy he shared with all of us through his teaching, his service, and his music. Brother Martin, we remember.

### IN REMEMBRANCE, ALUMNI

Michael P. Adams '65, parent of Jennifer L. Martin '88  
 Jonathan E. Barkocy '86  
 Frank P. Bigelow '78  
 Leland J. Bruzzone '50, parent of the late John L. Bruzzone '73 and Ann M. Blach '87  
 Joseph S. Chang '56  
 Raymond J. Darwell '63  
 Daniel T. Dolan '59, parent of Timothy S. Dolan '91  
 Gwendolyn B. Eng '82  
 Gerald K. Evans Jr. '51  
 Annette M. Fagan '84  
 Edward R. Fitzgerald '45  
 David A. Frisella '85  
 Rosemary Goode '78  
 Jacqueline M. Guiteras '98  
 Thomas H. Gularte '60  
 Mary E. Jacoby '84  
 Robert C. Jaspas MBA '77  
 Howard W. Jones '83  
 James P. Keating '59  
 Daniel C. Leary '61  
 Mary M. Marler '82  
 Ronald R. Martins '59  
 Andre J. Marty '61  
 David J. Mathews '95  
 Brian E. McCarthy '59  
 Paul E. McCaughey '82  
 Barry J. McLennan '67  
 John P. Montesa '86  
 Owen L. Murray '62  
 Rosa M. Novello '95  
 Maurice F. Pellissier Sr. '51  
 Frank X. Perez '63  
 Rosa C. Salazar '78  
 Thomas J. Sheridan '63  
 Catherine P. Sherwood '84  
 Richard E. Sigaty '59  
 John F. Thomas '81  
 Kenneth W. Thomas '85  
 Olga K. Wholey '78  
 Helene L. Wood MA '86

Please see [stmarys-ca.edu/saint-marys-magazine](http://stmarys-ca.edu/saint-marys-magazine) for remembrances of Professors Lynn A. Meisch, Gemma Niermann, and Philip W. Perry.

## CONSIDER FURTHERING YOUR EDUCATION.



Saint Mary's offers graduate degree programs in: Business, Finance, Accounting, Technology, Education, Counseling, Leadership, Kinesiology, Writing, and Dance.

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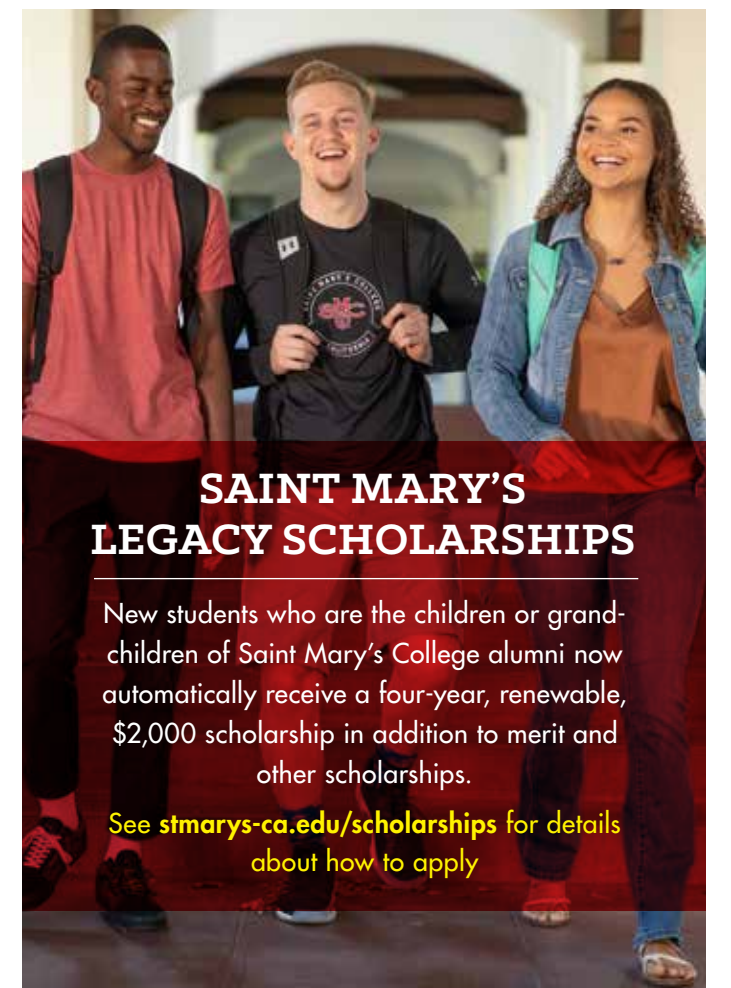
## JOIN US FOR A VIRTUAL REUNION WEEKEND

**JULY 16-18, 2021**

We invite you to come together from wherever you are to celebrate your best Saint Mary's memories with fellow Gaels! Join us online for virtual tours, lectures, and celebrations.



Learn more at: [stmarys-ca.edu/reunion-weekend](http://stmarys-ca.edu/reunion-weekend)



## SAINT MARY'S LEGACY SCHOLARSHIPS

New students who are the children or grandchildren of Saint Mary's College alumni now automatically receive a four-year, renewable, \$2,000 scholarship in addition to merit and other scholarships.

See [stmarys-ca.edu/scholarships](http://stmarys-ca.edu/scholarships) for details about how to apply



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Saint Mary's President James Donahue has led the College with vision and empathy. We reflect on his legacy in this issue and wish him a fond farewell.